

PREFACE

in 1492, contains only thirty-one. Aldo Manuzio brought out what is regarded as the *editio princeps* at Venice in 1500, containing ostensibly 368 letters, but, in reality, allowing for repetitions, 350. This was the basis of three other editions printed at Venice in the sixteenth century; in 1548 (Toresano), 1562 (^{fe}al segno della Speranza"), and 1584 (Domenico Farri), respectively. In Girolamo Gigli's monumental *Opere della Serafica Santa Caterina da Siena*, the letters, illustrated by the learning of Padre Federigo Burlamacchi, occupy volumes ii. and iii. (Siena, 1713, Lucca, 1721) ; in this edition, which still remains the standard one, the number is brought up to 373. Niccolo Tommaseo's convenient edition in four volumes, published at Florence in 1860, is practically a reprint of Gigli and Burlamacchi, the letters being differently arranged, with a somewhat modernized and not always judiciously amended text.¹ A new and critical edition of Catherine's letters is greatly needed. In the following pages, for convenience of reference, I give the numbers in Tommaseo's edition, with those of Gigli in brackets, but, as far as possible, have revised the text of my quotations by collation with the manuscripts.

From the very outset, the biographical and historical value of Catherine's letters has been, to a considerable extent, impaired by the copyists (and the editors who followed them) omitting or suppressing passages which appeared to them of merely temporary interest, or not tending immediately to edification. A certain number appear to have been deliberately expurgated, in cases where the writer's burning words seemed likely to startle the susceptibilities of the faithful. This process seems to date back to the generation that immediately followed that of Catherine's original disciples. A striking instance is seen in a certain letter, of which the subject is sufficiently obvious, which Aldo introduces with the rubric : " To one whose name it is better not to write, because of certain words used in the letter. Let not whoso reads, or hears it read, wonder if the sense seems to him broken ; for,

¹ An excellent selection from the letters, based on Gigli's text, has been published in English by Miss Vida D. Scudder (London, 1905).